

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A method of using a printer to distribute a document stored on a server, the server being connected to a network, the method comprising the steps of:

using the printer and at least one cryptographic key to establish a
5 printer identity with the server;

using the printer to receive an encrypted document from the network;

using the printer to decrypt the document; and

using the printer to print the decrypted document.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the encrypted document includes a message indicating a number of copies to be printed; and wherein the printer prints the number of document copies indicated in the message.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the printer includes a smart card reader; and wherein the printer identity is established by inserting a smart card into the reader.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the smart card is used to perform the decryption.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the printer includes an embedded processor, and wherein the embedded processor is used to perform the decryption.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of ordering the document prior to establishing the printer identity.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the printer is used to order the document.

8. The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of previewing at least one low quality document prior to ordering the document.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using at least one cryptographic key to authenticate the printer prior to ordering the document.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the printer is used to render the decrypted document.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using the printer to indicate status of the printing so that the server can charge for copies that were actually printed.

12. A system for the distributed printing of documents, the system comprising:

a computer network;
a server connected to the network, the documents being stored on the
5 server;

a printer connected to the network, the printer being programmed to use at least one cryptographic key to establish an identity with the server via the network;

10 the server being programmed to send at least one encrypted document to the printer after a document order has been placed;

the printer being further programmed to retrieve the encrypted document, decrypt the retrieved document, and print the decrypted document according to the document order.

13. The system of claim 12, further comprising a client for placing the document order.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein the server stores low quality documents for customer preview.

15. The system of claim 12, further comprising a smart card for providing at least one cryptographic key to the printer and for performing the decryption, the smart card passing the decrypted document to the printer.

16. The system of claim 12, further comprising a smart card for providing at least one cryptographic key to the printer; and wherein the printer includes an embedded processor for using at least one cryptographic key to perform the decryption.

17. The system of claim 12, wherein the printer is further programmed to indicate status of the printing so that the server can charge for copies that were actually printed.

18. A network printer comprising:

means for reading at least one decryption key;

means for receiving an encrypted token from the remote site;

means for using a decryption key to decrypt the token;

5 means for sending the decrypted token to the remote site;

means for receiving an encrypted document from the network;

means for using a decryption key to decrypt the document; and

means for printing the decrypted document.

19. A network printer comprising:

a smart card reader;

a network interface;

a processor; and

5 memory for storing a program that, when executed, causes the processor to use the smart card reader to read a cryptographic key, use the network interface to receive an encrypted document, use the decryption key to decrypt the encrypted document, and print the decrypted document.

20. The printer of claim 19, further comprising a keypad and display; wherein the program further causes the processor to receive a document order from the keypad.

21. The printer of claim 19, wherein the program further causes the processor to send printing status to the network interface.

22. The printer of claim 19, wherein the program further causes the processor to parse a message from the decrypted document, the message indicating a number of ordered copies, and wherein the program further causes the processor to print the ordered number of copies of the decrypted

5 document.

23. The printer of claim 19, wherein the program further causes the processor to render the decrypted document.